



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0910GA-1 for County Board of Education of Richmond County

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's work in the four assurance areas (as a RT3 district) "has helped us build a foundation for personalized learning." <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards – progress in adopting CCSS.</li> <li>Data – State Longitudinal Data System; more rigorous assessment process through PARCC.</li> <li>Teacher effectiveness – professional learning in all content areas; support from instructional coaches and trainers; teacher and leader evaluation and induction programs.</li> <li>School turnaround – no details given.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Applicant's vision is driven by the goals of 90% graduation rate, 90% college success, and 90% competitiveness with peers throughout US and world. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to deeper learning and college readiness.</li> <li>Embraces challenge of transitioning from a traditional classroom model to a student-centered individualized learning model.</li> <li>Improving literacy across the curriculum.</li> <li>Applicant notes that educators must become learners in order to pursue the opportunity of personalized (and blended) learning.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Beyond these commitments, the reform vision does not provide a clear and credible approach to deepening student learning, equity, or, "personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests."</li> </ol>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant aspires to include all its students in the initiative based on a district median of 84% economically disadvantaged. Fifty-six of its fifty-seven schools were selected because they individually exceed 40% low income students; however, the 40% requirement applies to all participating students in the aggregate, so the application could have included all schools (one additional).</li> <li>The table listing schools and students indicates 31,000 participating students.</li> <li>The applicant's approach to implementation is establishing a wireless environment in all schools to provide the infrastructure for personalized learning, then building on current RT3 assurances with professional learning and participation in personalized learning environments. The information provided is insufficient to determine if the proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation.</li> </ol>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant offers a theory of action driven by teachers as learning facilitators, increased learning time (24/7), and technology enablers to engage students in authentic work, purposeful work that results in lasting learning, and acquiring of college and career ready skills.</li> <li>The cornerstones for designing personalized learning environments, as envisioned by the applicant, are access to technology, and the use of social media tools to "connect and work together to promote and enhance learning experiences."</li> <li>The proposal plan (goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, parties responsible) describing how these principals would be</li> </ol>		

scaled up and translated into meaningful reform is actually provided in A.4. That plan involves two tiers of effort: a supported and universal infrastructure of technology and capacity building in Tier I and targeted design of personalized learning for specific grades and areas in Tier II. There are no details on the nature of the personalized learning that is envisioned. The basic outline of a responsibility and accountability structure is also provided.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proposal contains LEA-wide goals for summative assessments, achievement gaps, and graduation rates are provided. Goals for college enrollment rates are not included.</li> <li>2. The proposal does not attempt to tie its personalized learning approach to these goals and there is insufficient information to draw conclusions.</li> </ol>		

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	6
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The applicant has provided limited evidence of past success. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Four SIG high schools have shown improvement in attendance, discipline, graduation rate, and selected content areas. Only graduation rate statistics are provided. Graduation rates for students with disabilities have doubled over four years.</li> <li>2. The only district-wide statistic provided is graduation rate which increased from 66.3% to 77.5% from 2007 to 2010.</li> <li>3. Equity in learning and teaching has not been discussed.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. The applicant has not described ambitious and significant reforms or its organizational capacity to undertake dramatic transformation in the area of personalized learning with the exception of limited evidence provided in B(3).</li> <li>3. The district makes student performance data available to teachers and parents, making the data available to subject and content area planning teams, administrators, and during parent conferences.</li> <li>4. In summary, despite some positive data points, little evidence is demonstrated of a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement.</li> </ol>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The applicant provides an extensive description of the financial data that is regularly published by the district, including transparency of many items beyond the request of this section. Unfortunately, the applicant has not confirmed that school-by-school expenditure reports that include categories of personnel (a, b, and c) and non-personnel (d) expenditures are made available to the public.</li> </ol>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The state is a RT3 grantee currently implementing changes in the four assurance areas, Presumably, these changes have improved conditions and autonomy for the applicant to implement personalized learning environments, although the applicant has not provided beyond the project names associated with the four assurance areas.</li> <li>2. The applicant believes the state's alternative education rule (governing enrichment, grade recovery, and grade acceleration) covers necessary differentiation for individual student learning.</li> </ol>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:		

1. The applicant surveyed teachers and students on current instructional practices and attitudes, held a technology-in-the-classroom sharing forum, and hosted a stakeholders meeting to discuss the grant proposal. The applicant also provides information on its collaboration with stakeholders in general.
2. Although the application is not signed by a union president, no mention is made of the alternative requirement to provide evidence that at least 70% of participating teachers support the proposal.
3. Five letters of support are provided.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

1. The application provides a list of data tools and personalized learning resources utilized by the district to identify gaps and inform instruction. The district uses an AdvancED adaptive system of school improvement and support tools (ASSIST) to manage progress toward strategic goal realization; however, no mention is given about how this system will adapted to incorporate that applicant's personalized learning initiative.
2. A statistical summary of achievement gaps is provided for students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students; however, there is no discussion of how these data will inform or shape the implementation of personalized learning.
3. The applicant has outlined a cursory plan for implementing stated goals (increase improvement in math, science, social studies, and graduation rate), but the plan lacks a timeline and any indication of how student subgroups or grade levels will be targeted.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	2
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The application provides a discussion of the promise and challenges of personalized learning, but does not discuss the district's approach to implementing instructional strategies for participating students. No part of a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, parties responsible) is provided.</li> </ol>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	2
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The application provides a discussion of the teaching promise and challenges of personalized learning, but does not discuss the district's approach to developing its teachers' capacity to implement and support personalized learning, except that the district will expand and support the growing use by its teachers of Edmodo learning communities. No part of a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, parties responsible) is provided.</li> </ol>		

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	2
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. While the application provides some background on how classroom technology has been installed and managed by the district to this point, no information is provided on how the LEA central office would be structured to deliver personalized learning to all participating schools, provide school leadership teams with sufficient flexibility and autonomy, foster credit based on mastery, give students a variety of learning times and modes, or ensure that the district's personalized learning programs are accessible to all students.</li> </ol>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	2
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The application summarizes the current state of access to content and tools, but does not provide a plan to ensure access to content, tools, and other learning resources pertaining to the implementation of the applicant's proposal.</li> <li>2. The application summarizes shortcomings in the district's current level of technical support without a plan for appropriate level of support pertaining to the applicant's proposal.</li> <li>3. The application describes the integration of existing information systems but does not indicate if parents and students can now, or will be able in the future, to export their information in an open data format.</li> <li>4. The district is connected to the Georgia State Longitudinal Data System and therefore, hopefully, meets the interoperability requirement.</li> </ol>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The response depends heavily on the district's ongoing "continuous process of improvement that focuses on student achievement." This system utilizes the Georgia School Improvement process and applies to the district and each of its schools. While this system may represent a valuable platform for managing continuous improvement, the application does not present a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. Nor does it describe how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on its investments associated with creating, and perfecting, personalized learning environments.</li> </ol>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The application describes its existing communication/engagement mechanisms with the implication that they would support its RTTD project as well. The applicant envisions social learning platforms, set up for various purposes connected to the project, as playing a valuable role in fostering communication and learning, enabling district administrators to monitor stakeholder involvement and support, and work with teachers and other stakeholders to problem-solve and collaborate. Details on how these networks would be set up and maintained are not provided.</li> </ol>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The response outlines an implementation timeline beginning with a first year focus on 1) installing infrastructure, 2) professional development, as well as 3) full implementation of additional professional development, technology, and personalized learning in grades 4 and 6 and approximately one-third of high-school teachers and students. Subsequent years will fill in other grades and students.</li> <li>2. Performance measures are provided, although virtually all measures match academic progress or effective teacher/principal. The applicant has not proposed non-cognitive, health, or social-emotional indicators as required by the NIA.</li> <li>3. The response does not provide the rationale for its indicators, what early warning data it will monitor to evaluate implementation success, or a process for reviewing and improving the measures over time if insufficient to gauge implementation progress.</li> </ol>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The response to this section is a restatement of the applicant's need and plan, much of it duplicative of text in other</li> </ol>		

sections. The response does not address the applicant's plans to evaluate the effectiveness of its funded activities, or how it will more productively use, time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The applicant's funding request is \$39 million; no information on funds from other sources is provided.</li> <li>2. The budget is divided into four parts: Infrastructure (72%), Grant Management (2%), Effective Teachers and Leaders (12%), and Data Systems That Inform Instruction (14%).</li> <li>3. Infrastructure includes hiring 28 instructional technology staff, the creation of a wireless system for all schools, purchase and management of mobile devices, and interactive white board upgrades. The budget comes to almost \$1,000 per participating student.</li> <li>4. Effective Teachers and Leaders includes 6 personalized learning staff, training stipends, and supporting costs. Some instructional materials (\$189,000) are budgeted in this section.</li> <li>5. Data Systems includes some additional staff, assessment tools, training stipends, and two learning products: \$2.4 million over the life of the grant for an online learning platform like Education 2020, and \$80,000 for tuition reimbursement for accredited coursework such as the Georgia Virtual School. In total, instructional materials and digital content constitutes less than 10% of the overall budget; while infrastructure, staffing, and professional development are clearly imperative, it is hard to see how the district could achieve its performance goals without a greater investment in digital content.</li> <li>6. There is no budgeting or contingency for teacher-created digital content, additional learning technologies, or solutions that will most certainly emerge in the next four years, or for continuous improvement, community engagement.</li> </ol>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The applicant lists three factors that it believes will help it sustain its personalized learning initiative beyond the years of the grant: 1) new electronic and management tools and systems installed as part of the district's participation in Georgia's RT3 implementation, 2) community support through an ongoing collaboration with Citizen's Oversight pay as you go committee, and the expectation that technology will become cheaper and more available to students over time.</li> <li>2. Regardless of how the applicant chooses to define sustainability, it has not provided a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, parties responsible) or a three-year budget beyond the grant years.</li> </ol>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: Not submitted		

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		

The applicant provides evidence that it is working diligently in the four core assurance areas, partnering with the state and with its local partners, and making improvements in student achievement. Furthermore, it embraces personalized learning as a vital and complementary element of its overall reform strategy. Nevertheless, the application is incomplete and not comprehensive with several sections receiving zero or few points.

Total	210	65
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0910GA-3 for County Board of Education of Richmond County

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal communicates a coherent and comprehensive vision of reform and it does this to a great extent. This is partially attributed to this work building off of the Race to the Top work going on in Georgia. For example, this highlights the work currently going on to connect curriculum to the Common Core State Standards and develop associated assessments, build a data system to support the work of schools and instruction, support teacher learning and turnaround schools that are low achieving. However, additionally, the proposal notes the current emphasis the district's plan embodies to incorporate personalized learning and significantly, they acknowledge that this represents a shift from the traditional model of instruction that has been implemented in the district.</i></p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's proposal provides substantial evidence that their approach will support a high level of implementation. The proposal demonstrates this in several ways. First, the proposal explains that they have chosen their target schools because of their status as economically disadvantaged. And the proposal explains that this is the vast majority of the schools in the school district. Second, the proposal demonstrates a high level of understanding of the demographic conditions of each of the target schools. This shown, in table form, by showing categories of data about students by school such as the number of students at the schools, the number of students who are defined as high need and the number of students that qualify as low-income.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The district's proposal illustrates their theory of action and articulates an understanding that the practices of some teachers need to spread to other teachers. For example, the proposal communicates that the use of social media, edmodo, will be a vehicle for creating personalized learning experiences and through a survey of teachers, the district has learned that only a small number of teachers are using edmodo instructionally. Therefore, the plan aims to develop professional learning experiences for teachers to spread the use of edmodo from the pioneer teachers to all teachers. Key to communicating the use of social media to a broader group of teachers is that the proposal conceptualized social media tools as a learning environment, a collaboration environment as well as a tool for providing actionable data for instruction.</i></p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal is persuasive in communicating that the vision will likely result in improved student learning and that the proposal is reasonable for meeting the goals set by the plan. This is evident for several reasons. First, the proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of where the students are currently with respect to performance, graduation rate and the achievement gaps therein.

However, while the goals of the program predict that there will be growth among economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students, the projections do not anticipate reductions, or only very minor reductions, in this achievement gap. While this puts the in line with larger targets, it does not seek to alleviate this important gap.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	9
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal demonstrates a record of success in the school district in some respects. For example, the school district has shown a gradual increase in the graduation rates of the students. While they acknowledge that there is a lot of movement that still needs to happen, this does show an accomplishment of the school district. In addition, other aspects of the districts' record of success includes their implementation of a school improvement grant and teachers' disposition toward the use of technology to support personalized instruction. In addition, the proposal points out that progress has been made individually in the high schools that they are targeting. Finally, the proposal does show a record of making student progress information available to teachers and families.</i></p> <p><i>However, the proposal does not show that there is a record of success in alleviating the achievement gap nor does it show progress in improving student outcomes on any indicators outside of graduation rates.</i></p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The district's proposal has demonstrated some level of transparency in LEA processes. However, there are places where the processes could be more transparent. Although the annual financial reports are accessible to the public through the district web site, it is not clear that the budget is available at the school level. While the state salary schedule is listed, the personnel salaries at the school level are not listed for instructional staff or teachers.</i></p> <p><i>It is notable that the district proposal suggests that they seek transparency in their bidding process and purchasing process. In addition, they seek to provide transparency in the progress of the project's achievement of goals.</i></p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal demonstrates significant evidence of the LEA possessing the conditions and autonomy to implement their vision of reform. For example, they explain how the district's logistics were able to coordinate their transportation plan in order to meet the needs of greater learning time for students in response to state policy. In addition, through the response to intervention program and a partnership with Communities in Schools, the district as been able to provide differentiated learning opportunities or alternative learning opportunities to ensure that students were being supported along their learning trajectory. Finally, the proposal mentions how the district has been able to upgrade and, in some cases, raze school buildings in order to ensure that the appropriate technological infrastructure is in place to support ambitious learning opportunities for students.</i></p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The district's proposal provides compelling evidence of creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with teachers and some community partners during the development of the project plan. For example, a technology forum was presented within the district where some teachers shared some of their strategies for using technology. At this forum, while it is not clear whether the proposal was discussed or the reform plan, there were opportunities for discussion and comments related to personalized learning. In addition, a stakeholders meeting was held to communicate the Race to the Top plan and receive</i></p>		

*comments and hear the stakeholders' perspectives. Furthermore, the district in general possesses structures and processes to facilitate communication with and encourage participation from a wide variety of stakeholders. However, this proposal does not make it clear the ways in which families and students were engaged in the development of the proposal nor does the proposal clarify the ways in which teachers were involved in the development of the proposal.*

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal presents a high quality plan for an analysis of the district's current status in implementing personalized learning. This is shown in several ways. First, the proposal describes several tools that enable a level of personalization currently. One example of this includes ASSIST, which informs a five-year planning cycle and encourages a student focus in the district's strategic planning. Second, using the data systems, the proposal identifies key gaps in student achievement, which can be mitigated by a more individualized focus. Finally, the plan identifies resources and infrastructure related to technological tools to support personalization that need to be available to members of the district in order to reach the performance goals of this project.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The district's plan contains a plan for improving student learning that includes some strengths as well as some aspects that require more clarity. This is shown in several ways. First, the proposal states that the online platform-based learning experience will be designed for students to discover their own learning style and demonstrate their understanding through different modalities. Furthermore, the online platform also will enable students to develop tech-related skills, have access to teacher feedback outside of school and collaborate with their peers on various learning tasks. Moreover, the online learning experience enables students to work on different material at their own pace, which the proposal reasonably argues, can support students that are in need of greater support. In this way, the learning experience becomes more flexible, in general, with respect to pacing, the time of day students engage in school related work, the content that they engage in and the way in which they demonstrate their learning.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to note about this plan is that fundamental to this conceptualization of learning is learner feedback. The online platform, as the proposal states, provides feedback to learners and provides data (student work) for teachers to react and respond to. While the proposal stresses this is key for all learners in their program, the proposal rightly notes this importance to learners with greater needs.</i></p> <p><i>One missing participant in the proposal's conceptualization of the learning environment; however, appears to be the parents. It is not clear from the proposal how or if parents fit into their model of the student learning experience using the online platform.</i></p> <p><i>It is also important to mention that the description of the learning experiences on the social media platform are too general to assess the extent to which the learning experiences will be of high quality and tied to the needs of diverse learners. Nor does the description provide substantial descriptions of the training and support that will be made available to students in order to ensure that they will be able to maximize the potential of the learning experience provided through the online platform.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, while proposal identifies a model of learning facilitated through the online platform, it is not clear that the students will develop a meta-awareness that what they are learning is key to their success.</i></p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	6
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The district's proposal provides a plan for improving teaching and learning. This plan includes some strengths as well as some elements that need more specificity. First of all, the district proposal understands that implementing personalized learning environments for students is not only a change, but a paradigmatic shift for teachers that will require a great deal of attention. This attention will be provided by a belief that teachers in community (working together, being collegial, learning from one another) can experience this paradigmatic shift. The professional community will not only be supported through an online platform, but also administrative support, release time and access resources in and out of the district.</i></p>		



*The online platform supports a model of teaching that acknowledges that a great deal of teaching happens outside of the classroom, communication with students and families is paramount and providing differential learning experiences is key to supporting student progress. The learning experience for the students provides regular data to teachers about students' understanding of the content as well as chances to respond quickly to students' work.*

*While this plan includes the aforementioned strengths, there are several elements that are not so clear. First, it is not clear how the online platform-supported model of instruction is aligned or feeds into some system that assesses instruction. This seems like it would be a part of this model of instruction since a great deal of instruction not only appears to take place online, but also data from instructional practice would be save on the platform, for example, through comments provided for students or instructional tasks offered for students to complete. This has significant implications for teachers and principals in how they evaluate and ultimately improve instruction.*

*Second, it is not quite clear how the teachers become proficient with this model of instruction or how they develop as users (aside from simply using the platform). The proposal rightly points out that this presents a shift in paradigm for the teachers and so it is unclear in the proposal how the teachers are taken (figuratively speaking) from their old paradigm to a new one.*

Related to the previous two points, the proposal does not present a clear model of implementation for moving the teachers to the online platform. Based on other sections of the proposal where it is acknowledged that the shift in teaching will be dramatic, perhaps there will be a developmental arc that represents both a teacher's competency with the technology and their competency to instructionally use the technology to support student learning. This seems to be a significant point that is missing.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The district's proposal describes some of the necessary practices and policies to support personalized learning. For example, as evidenced by the organizational chart, key cabinet members are in place to support schools' principals. Moreover, the Media and Instructional Technology Department and the Instructional Coaches appear to be uniquely positioned to support the use of technology as well instructional approaches. In addition, the schools are expanding their wireless infrastructure to meet the needs of greater use.</p> <p>Moreover, there are instructional policies that are in place to support personalization. While the proposal does not specifically refer to adapting content to the needs of specific groups of student, the proposal notes the role of the instructional coach—at least one at each school—to support highly effective learning experiences.</p> <p>Additionally, another policy to support personalization is the way that students can individualize their credentialing opportunity. For example, students have the chance to participate in credit recovery through an online platform or virtual school, and students can even enroll in credit-bearing courses at a local university.</p> <p>However, it is noteworthy that there are no policies to support local administrative autonomy at the school level. For instance, it is not clear if local administrators have any role in making personnel decisions.</p> <p>Also, the proposal does not specifically describe how the necessary learning resources developed and supported through this project will address the needs of students with disabilities or English Language Learners.</p> <p>Finally, as noted above, the proposal describes alternative ways that students can demonstrate mastery for credentially purposes. However, the proposal does not adequately describe how students will be able to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple time points and in multiple comparable ways.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p><i>The proposal shows that the LEA and the school infrastructure supports to a degree the advent of personalized learning. For example, all educators, parents and students have access to computers and other related learning resources through local partnerships with organizations like the regional library system, the housing authority and the Y. While technical support is a challenge based on few human resources to provide technical support, currently the district contracts out to local companies to fill their gaps in capacity. The district has student information system that integrates with every software product used in the schools and through this information system, parents have access to daily reports of their child's progress. Finally, the district</i></p>		

*is also connected with a state longitudinal data system that provides historical data and assessment reporting software.*

It is worth noting that despite the fact that the proposal acknowledges that the change in technology use for educators and students will be substantial, the proposal does not include enough clarity in describing the support that students and teachers may require to make this change. The new paradigm of use is a 24 hour a day model of use that seems to require a different model of technical support.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's proposal generally describes a continuous improvement process that will inform the effective implementation of their reform work. However, this process requires much more specificity. For example, the proposal states that the schools use the Georgia School Improvement process for continuous improvement. This ensures that schools identify goals within an improvement plan that articulates an action plan to reach the desired results. However, there is not enough description to give a sense of the process, the measures, or the cyclical process that informs improvement. This improvement process focuses the districts' reform work as well as the professional development available to teachers. The proposal states that ultimately the state model of continuous improvement has guided the development of school plans and is used to monitor the progress of the district. This, too, needs more description. While it is important to have this process in place that the proposal mentions, the process is not described in a way to know how the applicant will monitor, measure, what they will measure, when and by whom in order to assess the quality of the investments in this proposal.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The district's plan includes a high quality plan for communication and engagement. This is demonstrated in several ways. For instance, the executive director of student services serves as a liaison among school district, schools and the public as part of the position.</i></p> <p><i>Additional online platforms enables teachers to stay informed and join a variety of professional learning experiences as well as making the general bidding process available and visible to the public.</i></p> <p><i>The Board of Education often asks parent groups for input and some parent groups have been formalized, such as PTA, PTO and Special Education Advisory Council.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal also states convincingly that the presence of a more robust online platform can facilitate greater opportunities for communication with parents, who for a variety of reasons, do not always attend the open houses at schools. The online platform also holds promise for collaborative problem solving among educators and district officials.</i></p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's proposal does include ambitious, but achievable performance goals. And these performance goals target subgroups important to the district's overall plan. The proposal is sensible in the timeline in that the plan will focus in the first year in making sure the wireless infrastructure is in place. Moreover, the proposal illustrates the number of students that will be impacted over time through their involvement in this project.</p> <p>There are two elements of the performance measures that are unclear; however. First, the proposal does not clarify how the high school students will be integrated into these measures. There is some rationale as to why the performance measures will focus on fourth and eighth grade, it is not clear how the high schools students will be integrated into this program and therefore which students will be measured.</p> <p>Second, it is not clear how the measures will be reviewed in order to modify them over time based on the experience of the work. It seems reasonable that some reflection or review process could inform how the measures provide formative information for district officials, for example.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

While the district's proposal clearly establishes what the goals of this program of work are and, in the previous section, the performance measures were made clear, it is not clear what the plan is to evaluate the effectiveness of this project. Specifically, based on the measures in the previous section, or the work plan in general, one might infer that the evaluation is an all or nothing proposition. That is, it is not clear if there is a plan presented to understand the effectiveness of the project, who would be responsible for carrying out the plan and what tools or methods the person or people would use to evaluate the program of work.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <i>The district's proposal presents a sufficient budget to support this work. For example, the proposal identifies all of the funds that will support this work. The budget narrative explains more specifically what funds will be used for with respect to budget categories. The description appears to be reasonable and the money will be allocated for resources and work that is directly connected to the work of the proposal.</i>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <i>The district's proposal includes a plan for sustainability of the project that provides some assurances and some concerns for continuation. For example, the proposal notes that some of the necessary infrastructure changes necessary for this project have already been made through other sources of funding and the infrastructure affords the opportunity for use of technologies into the future. The project has support from state and local leaders, which may include financial support in the future. However, even though the plan conjectures that in the future digital learning tools will be cheaper, the plan does not suggest ways aside from the Citizen Oversight committee to pay for the work.</i>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <i>There was not evidence of this competitive preference priority in this project proposal.</i>		

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: <i>Personalized Learning Environments are key to this proposal and it is evident in the plan to improve student learning within the district. Personalized Learning also guides the development of an online learning platform and the necessary alleviate the achievement gap that exists in the school district.</i>		

Total	210	121
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# Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: The optional budget supplement was not included in the proposal.		



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0910GA-4 for County Board of Education of Richmond County

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: While there is a description that their vision will continue to build on their recent work relative to their state's core educational assurance areas in RTTT, it seemed inadequate in articulating a clear and credible approach in how it would increase equity. The approach to their goals were ambiguous with vague references to deepening student learning.		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The approach that Richmond applied in selecting their participating schools was feasible and thorough. There is a preponderance of evidence to justify selecting the schools that are economically disadvantaged.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: Applicant lacked elements of a high quality plan including goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. Although there was a stated theory of action, it was not connected to the student learning outcomes described in later sections of the application.		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	1
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: Goals are not stated in measurable terms, therefore, are not able to be evaluated as ambitious and achievable. ESEA targets are missing and therefore it is not possible to see if goals are equal to or exceed state levels. Over the course of the 4 years, the chart that shows achievement gap did not decrease the gap between subgroups. Graduation rates are now being determined by a new formula and are not available. There was no evidence of college enrollment data.		

#### B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score

(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Richmond County's graduation rate has seen a steady increase since 2007 until this year when a new graduation rate formula was initiated. Major increases in graduation rates were noted in their SIG high schools. Very significant gains were seen in graduation rates for SWD in the SIG schools. There was no evidence given for closing achievement gaps or raising student achievement and again, no college enrollment data. Although it was implied that there had been ambitious and significant reforms in the SIG schools, there was no evidence stated as to what had occurred to make those gains. There was a description of student performance that is available to educators and parents every 15 days through a data management program with secure login sites and that collaborative planning occurs within subjects and grade level teams. It was also stated that administrators evaluate trends and patterns and that five days per year are provided to facilitate parent conferences. It must be noted, however, that the only data reported on a district wide basis was the graduation rate data.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not give evidence or a description of making available any school-level expenditures from state and local funds. There is no mention of the four categories of school level expenditures. There appears to be transparency about many other things in the district's budget processes, but not the specific items required for this grant.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>RCSS has communicated specific examples of how they have been successful in not only compliance of state legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments under RTTT and SIG, but how they have incorporated and adapted these into daily and system wide operational processes. Examples are Rtl, state alternative education rule, increased learning time, and teacher evaluation systems.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	2
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While there was description of how RCSS involves stakeholders in the support of their schools, they lacked specific evidence of including multiple stakeholder groups in the actual development of the proposal. Most notably, there was no mention of parent or family input. There was a survey given to teachers and students regarding personalized learning in the classroom. There was no mention of any revision of the proposal based on feedback from any group. There was a public forum where a dozen teachers shared how they utilize technology in the classroom, but there was no record of how many people attended or what groups they represented. Since there is an n/a on the application stating that the teacher union president's signature is not required, there should be evidence that at least 70% of the teachers from participating schools support the proposal and there is no evidence documented. While there are some letters of support from some organizations, there are many key stakeholder groups that are missing. There was no documentation of evidence about state or mayoral comments regarding the application or that at least 10 business days had been given for comment.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While there is evidence brought forth of the use of the Georgia Longitudinal Data System to identify gaps, there is not an adequate explanation or description of how their logic model or theory of action will help implement their personalized learning environment for students and bring reform. Their high quality plan does not have measurable goals; their activities are not stated clearly; and the deliverables are obscure.</p>		

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	1
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

This section of the application was a discourse about the possibilities of online learning platforms and the opportunities and advantages that they provide children. There was no high quality plan with activities, timelines, deliverables, or persons responsible.

None of the selection criteria for this section were addressed.

Quality of the plan could not be assessed because there was no plan that proposed an approach that included any of the strategies.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	1
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section of the application again did not address the selection criteria. There is no high quality plan with timelines, activities, deliverables, or persons responsible.

There are some interesting ideas posed, but nothing tangible to assess in the form of a plan.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Again, there is no high quality plan with goals, timelines, activities, or persons responsible so the overall score for this selection criteria cannot be thoroughly assessed. There is only a chart that outlines the governance structure of the LEA central office and some mention of opportunities that middle and high school students have to participate in credit recovery coursework and/or to enroll in courses through Georgia Virtual School. They may also earn college credit through dual enrollment through Augusta State University. Elementary students, it says, may demonstrate mastery outside the traditional grade level, chronological bands reviewed through the RtI process.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	1
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There is no high quality plan to ensure that every student, educator, and level of education system has the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. This section documents the need, but not a plan to fill the need.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

While there are some focused and convincing tools, processes, and strategies described for continuous improvement utilizing existing structures, there is no documented plan for how RCSS will monitor, measure and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top-District in professional development, technology, and staff

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There were some innovative ideas in this section for improving communication and engagement with stakeholders, but because it lacked the components of a high quality plan, it was unable to be fully assessed.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

For each measure listed in the applicant's tables, they did not include:

- a rationale for selecting that measure
- how the measure would provide formative information for their plan and how it would measure implementation success or areas of concern;
- how they would review and improve the measure if it was insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

The applicant did not address this selection criterion. There were also no measures of social emotional or career ready objectives listed in their application.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The description for this selection criterion was inappropriate and incompatible with what was required. The narrative did not address plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the funded activities. There was no mention of using other strategies to improve results, and specifically how to evaluate the effectiveness of this proposal utilizing these strategies.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: There was inconsistent evidence for the budget for this project. It was not always clear about the importance or connection back to specific project plans in the narrative. The budget narrative had funds shown from other sources in the infrastructure but not on the infrastructure table. It appears in the narrative that equipment for grades 4,6, 9 are purchased, but nowhere does it state the same for the other grades in other years. There seems to be confusion about costs of equipment and supplies during the four years of the grant. The narrative does not state re-occurring costs vs. one time costs consistently in the narrative. There is no reference for ongoing costs that will be incurred after the grant period with a focus on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: This selection criterion lacks sufficient evidence to qualify for a higher rating. There is no high-quality plan with activities, timelines, goals, persons responsible. The applicant clearly states, "The future is truly undefined." They clearly do not have a plan.		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: This is completely absent from the applicant's proposal. There is no evidence for resource alignment and integrated services in this application.		

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Generally across the development of this proposal, there was inconsistency. Much of the description in the proposal was a written narrative of philosophy, thoughts, and ideas. There was never a stated high quality plan with timelines, activities, goals, persons responsible, or deliverables. Although it was evident that RCSS had implemented the four core assurances, it was unclear as to exactly and specifically how the new proposed reform would enhance the assurances. There was not an attempt to explain how RCSS would expand student access to the most effective educators and how they would decrease achievement gaps across student groups. As a matter of fact, it appeared in their tables that at the end of the grant, the same gap would still be observed between student groups. For all of these reasons and mostly that there was never evidence of a high-quality plan, this application does not meet absolute priority one.

Total	210	62
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